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Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6836th meeting
Monday, 17 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wittig	(Germany)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Tian Lin
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Ahmad
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Côte d'Ivoire to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: The deep-seated fragilities stretching across the broad Sahel region of Africa are a matter of growing concern to the people and Governments of the region as well as to the broader international community and the Security Council. The threats and challenges cut across borders and disciplines, and their solutions must be cooperative and comprehensive. I am pleased, therefore, to brief the Council today on the progress made in the development of an integrated regional strategy for the Sahel that encompasses security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian dimensions, as requested of the Secretary-General in resolution 2056 (2012), adopted on 5 July.

Let me first underline some of the main challenges in the region, which is receiving renewed attention as a result of the complex and deeply worrisome crisis in Mali. The kinds of stress factors tearing today at Mali's social and political fabric are not unique to that country. Politically, the Sahel region has long been characterized by cyclical instability and unconstitutional changes of Government. State fragility is also visible in the economic and social spheres, given the limited capacity of authorities to deliver basic services and institutionalize dialogue. Economically, the Sahel States suffer from extreme poverty, with human development levels among the lowest in the world. Socially, the region suffers from fractures rooted in societal divides in some countries of the region. Political uprisings in those countries have been spurred just as much along ethnic lines, including in successive Tuareg revolts in the Niger and Mali and political conflicts in Mauritania. While States have recognized the need to engage with wide sections of the population to heal the social rifts dividing them, it has proven difficult to do so in the context of weak institutions, corruption and marginalization.

The challenges in the Sahel are not only political, but also involve the areas of security, humanitarian resilience and human rights. The long, porous borders of the Sahel region present a significant security challenge because they facilitate the activities of transnational criminal and terrorist groups, especially in remote and poorly administered regions. Porous borders also facilitate trafficking in arms, drugs and persons. Coupled with the effects of continued internal armed conflicts, those various threats undermine economic development.

Human rights challenges in the region result from a combination of long-standing weaknesses in the rule of law, social exclusion and discrimination. Countries in the Sahel have traditionally suffered from weak national human rights protection systems, with the judiciary often lacking independence or being under-resourced. Accountability is lacking and discriminatory practices against women and minorities are all too common.

Too often households and communities do not have the capability to withstand the damaging effects of the multiple climate and market shocks. For the most vulnerable, survival strategies during a severe crisis include selling off assets, particularly livestock, pulling children out of school, reducing the quantity and nutritional quality of food and consuming grain that may be required as seed for the next planting season. While they may save some lives, such strategies compromise the ability of households to rebuild after a crisis and have a life-long impact on children's development. To break that negative spiral, it is necessary to develop programmes that support the households most vulnerable to humanitarian crises so that they can better absorb shocks, rebuild after a crisis and support a longer-term transformation through education and livelihood diversification.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the international community of the humanitarian plight of the people of the Sahel. The emergency this year is the third of this scale since 2005. More than 18 million people were estimated to be at risk of food insecurity

in 2012, and more than 1 million children in the region are at risk of suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Food and nutrition insecurity may ease in October with the first harvest and a subsequent drop in food prices, but many households will continue to feel the consequences of the crisis. Further efforts are required within the current rainy season; for example, we have seen an increase in reported cases of cholera and malaria.

In view of the multiple recurrent and chronic emergencies the region is facing, it is critical that the international community commit to deal effectively with the underlying structural causes of vulnerability in the Sahel. As humanitarian agencies continue to provide life-saving assistance and address the most acute needs, we will also collectively aim at rebuilding assets, supporting livelihoods, scaling up social protection, and providing access to basic services without any form of discrimination. With sufficient and sustained resources, we will be able to consolidate the gains achieved through this range of interventions.

It is in this context that United Nations regional organizations in Dakar, including the United Nations Office for West Africa, the Regional Directors Team and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator have worked with Headquarters in developing the integrated response strategy for the Sahel. It builds upon the work of the the plan of action and the framework for resilience in the Sahel, which focuses on humanitarian and development challenges and looks at strengthening the resilience of communities in the region.

The integrated strategy provides a conceptual framework and strategic priorities to guide United Nations engagement in the Sahel at the regional level, and sets the basis for follow-up consultations with regional organizations, Governments and key actors in the region. The strategy will be comprehensive in scope, preventive in nature and respectful of States' international human rights obligations, and will build on existing mechanisms in the region. The strategy is regional because political and security challenges are interconnected, because environmental concerns cannot be geographically isolated, and because building economic resilience is restricted not to communities, but to the ability of the region as a whole to withstand climate and market shocks. As such, the focus of the strategy will be on areas where the United Nations can best engage on regional or cross-border issues and contribute to strengthening regional and subregional cooperation. Engagements will be anchored in national ownership and driven by regional needs, in a fluid exchange with implementing partners and Sahel Member States.

One of the important strategic areas of engagement where the United Nations may bring added value is the establishment of a forum for regional and international partners to discuss and coordinate their Sahel strategies. We also believe that the United Nations can provide expertise and support the sharing of national-level experiences to create synergies on disaster risk reduction, agricultural production and changing grazing patterns, social safety nets, environmental sustainability and water management.

We can promote conciliation, mediation and arbitration, including by strengthening local and regional capacityiesto prevent cross-border tension and mediate local conflicts. We can assist in developing regional integrated strategies and approaches to counter terrorism and organized crime, including through the provision of expertise on developing legal and institutional frameworks and anti-money-laundering measures. Importantly, we can assist in developing coordinated regional approaches to address the proliferations of arms and weapons and improve border management and cooperation.

In implementing all of these actions, the strategy will incorporate a human rights-based approach that encompasses the non-negotiable principles of respect for participation, non-discrimination and accountability. It needs to be re-emphasized that the blue-print for the implementation of the strategy should emerge from a process of broad discussions, debate and consensus-building with national and international partners to develop a sense of collective ownership.

While the integrated regional strategy for the Sahel will help the United Nations to deliver as one in the region, it is crucial that we acknowledge the importance of coordination with other important partners of the Sahel. The United Nations is looking to work with them in the implementation of the strategy, building upon the initiatives already in place to offer coherent and coordinated international support to the people and States of the Sahel. In particular, the United Nations is looking at synergies with the European Union in the implementation of its Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. We are looking

at continuing to work with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, and to build upon their plans of action on drug control and crime prevention. We are looking to engage with other subregional organizations and bilateral partners on the implementation of the strategy, including by working with national Governments in the implementation of their own programmes, such as Niger's national strategy on terrorism, security and development or Mauritania's food security and humanitarian strategies.

As part of this consultative process, the Secretary-General intends to host a high-level meeting on the Sahel on 26 September, in the margins of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The key objective of the meeting is to present, in broad strokes, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and generate international support for its implementation. It will also take stock of recent developments in the Sahel and examine current national, regional and international efforts to address the multiple challenges confronting the region. In addition, the meeting will aim at re-energizing the international response to requests for assistance by the Governments in the Sahel region and United Nations agencies to meet the most immediate needs of the population. The Secretary-General is convinced that the issue of the Sahel requires focused attention and follow-up, and he is still examining how best we can do that.

In closing, I call on the members of the Council and the wider international community to support United Nations efforts in the development of the integrated regional strategy, as well as to support the humanitarian appeal. I can assure the Council that the United Nations will remain committed to building the capacity of the States in the Sahel to secure peace and stability for the region.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Côte D'Ivoire.

Mr. Bamba (Côte D'Ivoire): Let me at the outset congratulate you, Sir, upon your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his comprehensive and very encouraging presentation. Like him, we place great hope in the upcoming high-level meeting on the Sahel on 26 September.

I take the floor in my capacity as representative of the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). I would like to focus on the situation in Mali.

Since the Council was last briefed on the situation in Mali (see S/PV.6820), noteworthy developments have occurred. The interim President, Mr. Dioncounda Traoré, returned to Mali on 27 July, with the facilitation of the ECOWAS mediator. On 29 July, he broadcast to the nation, promising to facilitate the formation of a national unity Government, and urging Malians to welcome the support of ECOWAS, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations in the resolution of the double crisis in Mali.

On 10 August in Accra, on the margins of the burial ceremony for the late President John Evens Atta Mills of Ghana, the ECOWAS heads of State urged the Malian authorities to form the Government of national unity without further delay. In addition, they stated that the presence of the head of the ex-junta in any Government organ would be unacceptable to ECOWAS. The message was passed on to Malian authorities.

On 20 August, the Prime Minister eventually announced the formation of a 32-member Government of national unity, as demanded by the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. The composition of the new Government received mixed reactions within Mali and the international community, with regard to its true reflection of Mali in its diversity.

It should also be noted that little progress has been made so far in the implementation of the road map leading to the holding of free, fair, transparent and credible elections in the course of the transition, largely due to the precarious security situation in the north and continued resistance in Bamako by marginal forces to the smooth implementation of the transitional arrangement.

With regard to the security situation, rebel and terrorist groups in the north of Mali have taken advantage of the near political paralysis in Bamako to consolidate their positions. On 1 September, Islamist extremists from the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) captured the strategic town of Douentza, about 170 kilometres from Mopti, the last major Government-controlled garrison town before entering rebel-held territory.

In another development, on 8 September, jittery Government troops allegedly shot and killed 16 unarmed Islamic preachers of the Dawa sect, some of whom were from Mauritania, in the central town of Diabaly, mistaking them for MUJAO militants.

Following protracted deliberations among the ECOWAS technical assessment mission, the committee of chiefs of defence staff and the Malian military and civilian authorities, on 1 September President Traoré finally addressed a formal request for assistance from ECOWAS, the AU and the United Nations to restoring the territorial integrity of Mali. That letter was circulated to the members of the Council through its President.

As welcome as that new development was, it fell short of the anticipation of the ECOWAS Authority, as the request ruled out the ECOWAS Standby Force Mission in Mali (MICEMA) presence in Bamako in phases I and II of the planned deployment, that is, to assist with securing republican institutions during the transition and to help to reorganize and train Malian forces. Instead, the request limited assistance to only the provision of equipment, logistics and intelligence in those phases, and allows for the deployment of troops only in phase III, namely, the reconquest of the territorial integrity of Mali.

Meanwhile, the ECOWAS heads of State attending the funeral in Ghana to which I referred requested that President Alpha Condé of Guinea delay the release of a consignment of military hardware imported by former President Amadou Toumani Touré to Mali, pending clarifications on the political situation in Bamako.

To that end, the Chairman of Authority dispatched to Conakry a successful high-level ECOWAS military and political delegation, led by the Commissioner of Political Affairs and joined by military officials from Mali in order to negotiate the safe transfer of the consignment from the ship to a secure storage facility under the control of the Guinean authorities, with ECOWAS bearing the cost of the demurrage.

The more extremist elements within the ex-junta, led by Lieutenant Amadou Konaré and Captain Bakari Mariko, and the marginal forces in Mali seized upon the two developments to unleash a campaign of vilification against ECOWAS and Guinea in the pro-putschist media and civil society groups in Bamako.

It is against that background that the meeting of the chiefs of defence staff was held in Abidjan on 14 and 15 September to consider the request from Mali and review the security situation. The outcome of that meeting, in addition to maintaining the three phases of the concept of operations, stressed the following points.

Second, Mali should accept phase I with a minimum deployment of troops/police to secure logistic facilities, civilian and military/police staff of MICEMA; ECOWAS should officially request the Malian Government to sensitize the population and the Mali defence and security forces to accept phase I, as amended, as the other phases cannot be carried out without phase I.

Third, phase 3 will be jointly planned between the ECOWAS Standby Force headquarters and Malian defense and security forces. This phase requires a great deal of combat assets, including fighter jets for the conduct of the operations. Such assets may be provided by ECOWAS or development partners.

Fourth, ECOWAS and development partners should provide the needed logistical and financial resources for the conduct of all phases of the operation.

Fifth, ECOWAS should intensify political efforts with Algeria and Mauritania with a view to securing their support for the operation.

Sixth, ECOWAS should, at the earliest possible time, organize a strategic planning meeting with the African Union, in consultation with the strategic partners, namely, the European Union, the United Nations and the United States of America.

Seventh, Malian authorities should comply with resolution 2056 (2012), on the total withdrawal of the Comité national de redressement de la démocratie et de la restauration de l'état (CNRDRE) from the political arena.

Eighth, Malian authorities should intensify efforts on an inter-Malian dialogue with the rebels through the establishment of a national mechanism.

In conclusion, based on what I have set out, it is obvious that although some progress has been achieved on the political and security fronts, several daunting challenges remain. In the light of this situation, I would like to mention the following trends that are likely, to a certain extent, to shape the current context of the situation in Mali.

First, the ECOWAS decisions on Mali continue to encounter fierce resistance from the more extreme elements among former CNRDRE members, and a vocal minority of so-called patriotic social forces who have built a coalition around Oumar Mariko and the Convergence patriotique pour le Mali.

Second, that situation risks diminishing the chances for creating a permissive environment for the deployment of MICEMA.

Third, furthermore, the request for military deployment only for phase III can hardly be fulfilled, because it will be extremely difficult and strategically unwise to deploy troops in the north of the country without a coordinating centre in Bamako.

Fourth, it appears that a sharp division has occurred between two factions of the ex-CNRDRE, one led by Captain Amadou Sanogo and the other by Amadou Konaré. That situation portends further clashes within the military, and complicates the transition. Captain Sanogo has declared his support for the request for ECOWAS assistance, while Lieutenant Konaré has vehemently opposed it.

Fifth, the question of leadership in Mali remains unclear and that is sending confused signals.

Sixth, the security and humanitarian situation in the north of Mali is getting worse and continues to pose a major threat to regional and international peace and security.

Seventh, the commendable efforts of the mediator, Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, with regard to the rebels are yielding qualified results and should be further encouraged.

Eighth, in closing, and as the Council knows, the meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs, held today in Abidjan in the framework of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, is still in progress and should be concluded shortly. What is noteworthy is that the meeting seeks to validate the decisions reached earlier by the meeting of the Chief of Defence Staff. In addition, those decisions will have to be further confirmed at the level of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and endorsed by the relevant organs of the African Union before landing at the Security Council.

Finally, it is the intention of the Commission to intensify contacts with the neighbouring States Algeria and Mauritania to build a workable consensus on the ECOWAS-led deployment of the stabilization force in Mali. To that end, a consultative meeting of the support group on Mali should be organized under the joint chairmanship of ECOWAS and the African Union.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.